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Friday, August 15, 2008

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Two ENT doctors join Children's Rehab hearing clinic team

SELMA - With the popularity of iPods and other MP3 players, loud music can affect a child's hearing ability and ultimately his or her academic success.

To address this and other hearing-related problems, Children's Rehabilitation Service (CRS) in Selma conducts a Hearing Clinic on the third Thursday of every month.

Recently, two ear, nose, and throat (ENT) specialists – Dr. Michael Bowman from Montgomery and Dr. James Wallburn of Tuscaloosa – were recruited to take turns working the clinic every other month.

"There was a time when we had difficulty recruiting an ENT doctor in the Selma area," said Sandra Hindman, an audiologist at the clinic. "Now we are blessed and fortunate to have two of them."

The clinic went on a brief hiatus after the longtime ENT doctor retired in June 2007. It resumed this past spring after the two doctors agreed to share the responsibilities of the clinic.

Wallburn is semi-retired after serving children with special hearing needs for more than 25 years. He provided services through the Tuscaloosa CRS Hearing Clinic and continues to serve children and families in that eight-county area. Bowman is a recent graduate of the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Medicine. He works for Montgomery Otolaryngology.

The purpose of the clinic is to identify hearing loss in children from birth to 21 years old. The clinic serves children in Dallas, Wilcox, Perry and Marengo counties.

"It is important for a child to hear normally because it is essential to how the child acquires speech and language skills," Hindman said. "Once a child is delayed, it might take awhile for speech and language skills to be acquired."

Aside from the ENT doctor, the clinic is staffed by social workers, a nurse and an audiologist to test children for hearing loss and determine if the loss is permanent, temporary or caused by allergies or wax build-up. The ENT doctor prescribes medication, surgery, or refers for a hearing aid assessment.

"We are grateful to have these two committed ENT doctors providing services to Selma and surrounding communities," said Melvina Moss, a nurse at the clinic and coordinator for the Selma CRS office.

CRS accepts referrals from concerned physicians, teachers, parents, and others. Based upon the need, the child is referred to one of several hearing-related clinics.

The clinics are held at the CRS office at 2906 Citizens Parkway in Selma. The telephone number is 334-872-8422 or 1-800-967-6876.

Children's Rehabilitation Service is a division of the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services, the state agency whose mission is to enable Alabama's children and adults with disabilities to achieve their maximum potential.